

## The role of school staff in supporting pupils where there is a concern about weight

This is a brief summary from the Islington guide “*What’s the role of school staff in supporting pupils where there is a concern about weight? Prevention, support and treatment*”.

Being overweight has many adverse effects even for very young children. However, parents are often unaware that their child is an unhealthy weight. Schools can provide a health promoting environment for all pupils and also play a role in identifying and supporting those pupils where weight might be a concern as parents are often unaware that their child is an unhealthy weight.

Reducing obesity can benefit pupils and the school by reducing teasing or bullying reducing behavioural problems stemming from anxiety or depression; increasing participation in active play or learning opportunities in PE and school sport; and reducing missed school days for medical appointments or treatment.

### Universal health promotion

Schools are in an ideal position to change pupils’ attitudes and health behaviours by using a whole school approach to healthy eating, physical activity and creating a health promoting environment. This requires a multi-faceted, coordinated approach involving all staff, such as teachers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors, extended schools co-ordinators, breakfast club co-ordinators, catering staff, school sports co-ordinators, school nurses, admin staff, parents and pupils.

Schools influence pupils’ lifestyle choices through what is being taught, the hidden curriculum, and the behaviour of school staff and the choices they make. It is really important that schools provide a consistent approach across the whole school. Inconsistencies will be confusing for pupils and families.

### Achieving a whole school approach across the whole day includes:

- Effective teaching and learning of healthy eating, food and cooking skills in PSHE and food technology
- Effective teaching and learning in PE
- Monitoring of packed lunch content
- Working with catering staff and lunchtime supervisors to promote healthy lunchtime choices
- Encouraging uptake of free school meal entitlement
- Active playgrounds
- Monitoring attendance during PE lessons and at physical activity clubs after school
- Displays
- Vulnerable pupils (what do they bring in their packed lunch, do they attend PE, what is their role when taking part in physical activity)

### Do the following inconsistencies happen at your school?

- Weekly cake stalls to raise money
- Food used as a reward
- Foods high in fat and sugar being the main or only food provided at parties and celebrations
- Pupils seeing, or being aware, of staff eating unhealthy lunches
- School staff saying they don’t like vegetables or oily fish to pupils
- School staff openly talking about their weight or the latest diet they are following
- School staff eating (unhealthy) food while on duty in the dining room or the playground
- Chocolates and biscuits in staff room but never any fruit or healthier other options available
- Pupils who don’t bring their PE kit being punished by not being able to have break
- PE being the topic that can be used for other activities such as watching a film
- Pupils only ever learning to bake cakes, biscuits, or other sweet things
- Getting the bus for school trips when the destination is only a walking distance away
- Collection of vouchers such as crisps or chocolate wrappers to get sports equipment
- Teachers not wearing PE kit or suitable sportswear while teaching PE
- Supply teachers being asked to deliver the PE lessons
- Teachers not role-modelling a positive attitude towards being physically active
- Not discussing the reasons for being physically active and the effect it has on the body as part of PE lessons
- Lack of suitable space or equipment to actively engage children in physical activity

**Are there any others that happen at your school but aren’t mentioned above?**

## Targeted work

The following information provides a brief overview of what to do when a member of staff has a concern about a pupil's weight. For more information refer to the full guidance.

- 1. Identification by any member of school staff**
- Concern brought to the attention of school staff
  - Visible identification
  - Quickly out of breath
  - Refusing to take part in PE
  - Food issues
  - Bullying (in conjunction with one of the above issues)

Take concern to pastoral care team

- 2. Pastoral care team**
- Any other information on pupil or family
  - Which member of team has best relationship with family
  - What are the likely options pupil / family might engage in

- 3. A member of the pastoral care team raises the concern**
- Show empathy
  - Be genuine in your dealings
  - Be non-judgemental and accepting of families' circumstances and ideas
  - Keep communication open so it can be continued at a later date if necessary

3 – 6 months

- 5. Family does not accept concern raised**
- Accept that the family is not taking this concern on at the moment
  - If appropriate give the family information on healthy lifestyle such as Change4Life leaflet
  - Check if it is alright to bring up issue again in 3 – 6 months' time

- 4. Family accepts concern**
- Signpost to services (see appendix: leaflet and advice)
    - Professional services
    - Community activities
    - Involvement in school activities
    - Information such as Change4Life or BHF physical activity or advice on sleep for children and young people.

### Staff responsibilities

- **All school staff:** identification and sharing of information about pupils with pastoral care team
- **Healthy weight, healthy lives lead** to be up-to-date with information and services available
- **Pastoral care team** to take part in decision making for the most appropriate route for an identified pupil. One of the team to be confident to raise the concern about weight with parent / carer or young person

- 6. Follow up**
- Good practice: check that the family is engaged in the activity they decided on
  - If not, discuss why not and find out if there is something else they would like to do
  - If they are engaged check at the end of the programme if they would like further support

**For more information, or the full guidance:** Islington Healthy Schools Team, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
7 Newington Barrow Way, London N7 7EP

Email: [marjon.willers@nhs.net](mailto:marjon.willers@nhs.net) or tel: 020 7527 5866